

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1.       Whitened crosslinked cellulosic fibers, obtained by a method comprising:  
          applying a whitening agent, crosslinking agent, and optionally a crosslinking catalyst to a web of pulp fibers to provide a web of treated fibers;  
          separating the web of treated fibers into individualized treated fibers; and  
          heating the individualized treated fibers at a temperature and for a time sufficient to provide individualized whitened crosslinked fibers.
2.       The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the whitening agent comprises a blue dye.
3.       The fibers of Claim 2, wherein the blue dye is an azo dye.
4.       The fibers of Claim 2, wherein the blue dye is an azo metal complex dye.
5.       The fibers of Claim 1, wherein the crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprise citric acid crosslinked cellulosic fibers.
6.       A method for making whitened crosslinked cellulosic fibers, comprising:  
          applying a whitening agent, crosslinking agent, and optionally a crosslinking catalyst to a web of pulp fibers to provide a web of treated fibers;  
          separating the web of treated fibers into individualized treated fibers; and  
          heating the individualized treated fibers at a temperature and for a time sufficient to provide individualized whitened crosslinked fibers.
7.       The method of Claim 6, wherein the whitening agent comprises a blue dye.
8.       The method of Claim 7, wherein the blue dye is an azo dye.
9.       The method of Claim 7, wherein the blue dye is an azo metal complex dye.
10.      The method of Claim 6, wherein the crosslinking agent comprises citric acid.

11. The method of Claim 6, wherein the crosslinking catalyst comprises sodium hypophosphite.
12. An absorbent product, comprising the fibers of Claim 1.
13. The product of Claim 12, wherein the product is a wipe, tissue, or towel.
14. The product of Claim 12, wherein the product is an infant diaper, adult incontinence product, or feminine hygiene product.